What: This guideline provides a framework for informing, involving, and obtaining buy-in from all participants throughout the duration of the project.

Why: Disseminating knowledge about a project is essential to a project's success. Business units, support services, courts, other government agencies, project team members and any auxiliary team members, etc. may be participants in the project. Everyone impacted by the project should be aware of the status of the project. People should be educated about the on-going progress of the project and its benefits.

When: The communication planning process can start during the scope discovery phase. The final communication plan should be finished soon after scope is completed.

Communications Methodology:
The communications methodology utilizes three directions for effective communication: top-down, upward and lateral.

> Top-Down: It is absolutely crucial that all participants in the project sense the executive support and guidance for this effort. The executive leadership of the organization needs to speak with a unified, enthusiastic voice about the project and what it holds for everyone involved. This will be 'hands-on' change management, if it is to be successful. Not only will the executives need to speak directly to all levels of the organization, they will also need to listen directly to all levels of the organization.

> The transition from the project management practices of project initiation to project implementation to the practices envisioned for the future of the project will be driven by a sure and convinced leadership focused on a vision and guided by clearly defined, strategic, measurable goals.

> Upward: To ensure the buy-in and confidence of the personnel involved in bringing the proposed changes to reality, it will be important to communicate the way in which the solutions were created. If the perception is that team members responsible for participating in a change were not consulted then resistance is likely to occur. However, if it is understood that all participants were consulted, acceptance is more promising.

> Lateral: Full support at all levels, where the changes will have to be implemented, is important to sustain buy-in of the changes. At this level (as with all levels), there must be an effort to find and communicate the specific benefits of the changes.

Communications Events:
Following is a list of sample communications events that can be established for a project. Each project will have unique needs, and will not necessarily need all of the communication events. The project manager will outline which of these sample events will be utilized on a particular project in the Communications Matrix for that project.

> Communication With Executive Management: The primary communication on project status and communication of issues requiring decisions by the Court Leadership will be done by the project manager. One of the primary methods of communication may be

status reports. Selected Project Team Members could contribute to their relevant section of the report.

Communication with an Advisory Committee: Communication of issues and decisions to an Advisory Committee will normally be accomplished through regular meetings of the committee.   The Project Manager usually has the primary responsibility for communication to the committee.

Communications with Media and other Governmental entities: Requests from the media and other governmental entities for information on the project may be referred to the Court Communications Officer and/or other assigned court officials and/or executive management.

Project Team Status Meeting: These status meetings are usually held on a regular or as-needed basis. Each member of the project team participates in the meeting. These meetings are usually called by the project manager. The members work off of a standard agenda format and are each responsible for contributing issues and materials for the meeting. If materials will be provided for the meeting, the responsible team member will distribute the materials in advance, if possible within time constraints to allow members to review them before the meeting. The project manager may also call a meeting with only selected team members to discuss localized issues/activities that are only affecting part of the project team.

Management Team Status Meeting: Communication of issues and project status to a Court Management team will be accomplished through regular project progress status updates at regularly scheduled meetings.

Meeting with other Agencies/Courts: These status meetings are usually held on a regular basis (weekly for example), although they can also be held on an as-needed basis. The project manager will maintain a contact list of all the outside parties that need to attend on a regular basis.

Intranet Access to Project Information: The project manager will specify what documents are to be kept in which location and will communicate this to all team members/stakeholders.

Communication of Meeting Results: Meeting minutes regarding the overall project should be posted in a location specified by the project manager and communicated to the team/stakeholders. Meeting minutes can also be emailed to team members/stakeholders that do not have access to the project document repositories (other agencies, for example). For each meeting, there should be an assigned meeting chairperson and an assigned meeting scribe. The meeting scribe would be responsible for taking the meeting minutes and action items. If the action item is an issue to be resolved, a person responsible for the issue will be assigned and the issue owner will be notified via e-mail by the project manager, if the issue owner did not attend the meeting.

Informal Communication: All team members should have access to project decisions made even if decisions were made in an informal setting. Any team member should share the results of this type of communication/meeting by communication with the project manager. Consider also any ground-rules for "informal communication" such as emails, informal conversations etc. Guidelines can be established for things such as maximum response time to emails or voice mails, which can have huge productivity impacts in a virtual team environment.